



THE BANGLADESH FACTOR IN INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY: IN POST COLD WAR ERA

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ABSTRACT

In South Asian nations India also is one of the most developing and strong nation. Development and partnerships between the nations it could be economic, political, social-cultural etc. India and Bangladesh both are the developing countries India and Bangladesh have shared common history, language, religion, culture etc. India's relationship with Bangladesh can trace its roots to the relationship between an idea of India and idea of Pakistani or Bengali separatism before 1947. Bangladesh's present and future cannot easily be understood without reference to Bengal's earlier conquest by the Mughals and later by the British, and to the Anticolonial struggles that led first to the formation of Pakistan and later to the liberation of Bangladesh. India played vital role in Bangladesh liberation war in 1971. Before 1947, Bangladesh India and Pakistan belonged to the same country under British domination but after partition of India, Pakistan established as a independence nation and due to the Pakistan internal issues Bangladesh got independence through the liberation war and India's support. After the independence India wants some stability it tried to resolve various issues affecting the two countries, some of the more important issues these are: security, border demarcation, and diversion of waters of common rivers, common land areas, trade issues, energy issues etc. India surrounds Bangladesh, 78.86% of its border lying with India.

KEYWORDS: Importance of Bangladesh for India, In the Post Cold War Scenario Developments and Cooperation, Major Factors for India

INTRODUCTION

Past few years the world has witnessed developments of great international significance. The most important of these developments which have radically changed the very nature of international relation are end of cold war. Moreover, the present Unipolar system may be transformed into a Multipolar system. Cause of that the foreign policies of almost all the nations big- o- small have been deeply influenced. Although the present world scenario has not assumed its final shape, it can be said that the post war power equations have completely changed now. Hence, India is no exception India foreign policy has to respond in accordance with the new trends and realities of the current international situation¹.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the Bangladesh importance in Indian foreign policy in post cold war period. States as units of international system cannot remain isolated from each- other. In The age of growing interdependence, there are always reasons for interactions among them. Their interactions constitute what is known as the international processes. These interactions are best reflected by the policies pursued by the states towards other states. These policies are generally identified as the foreign policies which involve regulating and conducting external relations of the states, with respect to others in the international scenario².

Padelford and Lincoln, point out that “foreign policy consists of courses of actions which a state generally undertakes to realize its national objectives beyond the limits of its own jurisdiction”³. The fundamental purpose of India's

foreign policy, and for matter of any state, is to promote its national interest⁴. Security has been a major driving force of India's neighbourhood policy. India's sympathies with democratic forces and its aversion to extra regional present are all geared to optimise its security interest, which is ensconced in its principle belief of a stable neighbourhood while engaging in a mutually beneficial relationship⁵. Foreign policy of a country is determined by the times in which it is conducted.

The Bangladesh's options on the 'India policy' may be subsumed under three policy alternatives- a policy of intransigence, a policy of manchalance, or a policy of accommodation⁶. During the post cold war period, the foreign policy India was mainly analyzed within the contours of the bipolar international system. This approach overemphasized the influence of global forces and undermined the impact of local or regional settings⁷.

The Relationship between Bangladesh and India is important and have a strong historic basis. Our geographical, proximity, cultural affinity and shared history should form the parameters of our relations⁸. In the post cold war period Bangladesh is crucial for India it represent opportunities and lessons worth learning. Bangladesh is one of our trading partners. India-Bangladesh are amongst the 12 countries that will be most severely affected by climate change⁹.

Importance of Bangladesh for India

Bangladesh is surrounded on three sides by India along a 4,094-Km land border. This result is near total geographical domination by India except for the 193-Km land border that Bangladesh shares with Myanmar¹⁰. According to the census, Bangladesh's population density is 964 people per Sq. Km. as per the 2011 government estimate, Bangladesh population is 142.32 million within the total area of the country 147,570 square Km¹¹. Bangladesh forms the end point of Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna river system, the second largest river system in the world, which drains vast areas of surrounding China, Nepal and India. Its land almost entirely low lying, with close to three-quarters less than ten meters above sea level. Large areas of the country are subject to annual flooding, with flood water originating from three different sources: rainfall, rivers and the sea¹².

India's policy towards Bangladesh and its decision to take part in the liberation war, among other factors, were motivated by its desire to see the emergence of a democratic, liberal and secular government¹³. It is appropriate to recall that the Indian armed forces made an unforgettable sacrifice to carve out Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971¹⁴. The emergence of a friendly neighbour on the eastern flank with no military ambition brought about a radical transformation in the region's power structure with India at its centre¹⁵. India's interest in Bangladesh liberation has thus come to be known as the Indian version of the Monroe doctrine. This was reportedly being proclaimed by Nehru in the early fifties¹⁶. Elaborated during his daughter, Indira Gandhi's governments and experimented under the latter's son Rajiv Gandhi. One noted Indian scholar writes about India doctrine-

"India has no intention of intervening in internal conflicts of a South Asian country and it strongly opposes any intervention by any country in the internal affairs of any other. India will not tolerate an external intervention in a conflict situation in any South Asian country if the intervention has any implicit or explicit anti-Indian implication. No South Asian government must, therefore, ask for external military assistance with an Anti-Indian bias from any country. If a South Asian country genuinely needs to deal with a serious internal conflict situation it should ask help from neighbouring countries including India. The exclusion of India from such a contingency will be considered to be an anti-Indian move on the part of the government concerned".¹⁷

Major Factors for India

Bangladesh is important for India because of the following factors for example- Regional connectivity, Land issues, Security concern, Water issues, Energy resources, Socio-cultural similarity, Environment and Climate change, Trade and Transit involvement etc.

Regional Connectivity

Bangladesh was the first to champion the cause of institutionalised regional cooperation in South Asia. One feature of our foreign policy is Look East policy. This meant enhanced cooperation, bilaterally and regionally, with and among neighbouring countries¹⁸. India provided a soft loan of \$ 1 billion to Bangladesh that will finance 14 development projects in Bangladesh with fixed annual interest of 1.75 payable with twenty five years including five year grace period. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Dhaka last year and the two countries signed a framework agreement for cooperation and development¹⁹.

Land Issues

Two agreements termed as “Historic” a Framework Agreement on Cooperation for development and a Protocol to the Agreement concerning the Demarcation of the Land Boundary between India and Bangladesh and related Matters were concluded. Eight other memoranda of understanding were also signed. The 65- paragraph statement includes detailed roadmaps for tackling every single outstanding issue. It ends with expressing the conviction of both sides that the visit and signing of these historic documents marks a “watershed” in the bilateral relationship²⁰.

Security Concern

Bangladesh's territorial and political security can be significantly bolstered by defence agreements with extra-regional actors for influence, the United States or China. Its increase the feeling of security in Bangladesh, but one thing is also notable that the same degree increases the perception of insecurity in Bangladesh²¹. The post cold war and especially post- 9/11 global security has turned its focus on intra-state issues with global security situation has turned its focus on intra- state issues with global ramifications. India from the very beginning of its existence has remained sensitive and concerned about peace and stability in its neighbourhood. This is because it believes that political instability and disorder on its periphery may impact its own security directly or indirectly²².

Water Issue

The Ganges river flows through three countries; Nepal, India and Bangladesh. Millions of people in Bangladesh depended on the Ganges for their livelihood. In Bangladesh nearly 90% of total human demand for water is for agriculture. India built at Farakka on the Ganges River to divert its waters to flush the silt of Hooghly river near Calcutta. It was a great concern for Bangladesh that the barrage would reduce drastically the water flow in the Ganges in Bangladesh with the result that salinity would be increased in the rivers, agriculture production would be less in the affected areas, navigation would be disrupted and forest cover would be reduced²³.

Socio-Cultural Similarity

Some Indian states, contiguous to Bangladesh belong to the same culture sphere as Bangladesh because of the Bengali language. This is a source of vital emotions which no government can ignore²⁴. According to 2001 census, 90 percent of the population is Muslim, just more than 9 percent are Hindu, with the remainder made up of Buddhist

(0.7%) Christians (0.3%) and animists and Others(0.1%) for the Muslim majority and the Hindu and the other minorities, religion and family lie at the centre of social life, offering a framework for general social conduct and underpinning what remains a predominantly patriarchal social order. Religion gives meaning to people in the sense that" it offers grounding to a moral universe that animates the everyday²⁵. Problems of connectivity can largely be attributed to the mistrust and suspicion that has been characteristic of Indo-Bangladesh relations since 1977. Security and sovereignty issues have been of paramount concern in Bangladesh's consideration of India's proposal for transit facilities. The nationalistic constituency in Bangladesh, for ideological reasons, does not favour greater economic relations and communication linkage between India and Bangladesh and wants to accentuate a security centric discourse for political reasons²⁶.

Environmental Scarcity

Environmental scarcity of land and its acute shortages exacerbated by fast population growth in Bangladesh have prompted millions of people to migrate to India-causes of that ethnic problems continuously increase in north eastern state such as Assam, Nagaland. Global warming is also effective factor in India-Bangladesh relation. In consequence of sea level rise due to global warming the environmental scarcity is increase, cyclone, storms and floods more frequent adding many more millions to the already continuing influx to India with serious implications on India's internal situations²⁷.

Trade and Transit Involvement

The economic relations between India and Bangladesh constitute a very significant aspect of the overall relations between the two countries. Bangladesh is one of the important markets for India's exports²⁸. Trade and commerce have remained a bone of contention between Bangladesh and India for many years. Bangladesh has maintained a steady position in asking India to provide greater access to the Indian markets. The proposed free trade agreement between Bangladesh and India has not yet been signed despite several rounds of talks.

A number of other measures including opening up of border heats and development of land customs stations, land ports are being adopted to boost the bilateral trade²⁹. India's export to Bangladesh in the year 2010-2011, was of US \$ 4, 586.8 million; Bangladesh's export to India in the year 2010-2011 was of US \$ 512.5 million. India has emerged as the biggest source of imports for Bangladesh and thus Bangladesh is desperate to export more to India but finds many hurdles in the form of tariff and non-tariff barriers³⁰.

In spite of Bangladesh being a large market for India's exports, Indian businessmen and entrepreneurs do not bestow upon it the care and attention it deserves the care and attention it deserves economic relations between any two countries are influenced by the climate and the state of their political relations. But this is more so between India and Bangladesh because of their being immediate neighbours and the big neighbour small neighbour syndrome³¹.

Illegal Migration

Migration by Bangladeshis into India has received considerable commentary in the Indian media. There have been two major stands to immigration debates in India- the scale of illegal immigration and the potential Threat of terrorism. In 2001, a group of Ministers report suggested that there were fifteen million illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in India. With the atmosphere of the so- called war on terror, there has been growing anxiety in India about the possibility that Bangladesh is now a safe haven for Islamic militant groups to launch attacks against in india³². Bangladesh was also reportedly engaged in persuading China of further develop a deep sea port at Sonadia Island. This becomes problematic for India who fears china's access to the Myanmar naval base in Hangyi Island and the monitoring station, of India's

Andaman and Nicobar Island. India fears China encircling India as part of its String of Pearls strategy. The relationship between China and Bangladesh since 1975 influences Bangladesh to move away from India³³.

In the Post Cold War Scenario Developments and Cooperation

Post cold war scenario has come to be characterized by the return of Multipolarity. Where there is a presence of great powers and small powers³⁴. In the 1990s there have been qualitative changes in the international system and the Indian domestic political system. The end of cold war, the emergence of United Germany, the efforts of integrating Europe, the collapse of soviet Union and emergence of the CIS, collapse of the communist system in most of East European countries, cancellation of transfer of cryogenic rocket technology to India by Russia, insistence of the USA on India to sign NPT, etc³⁵. The end of cold war and the politics of powers blocs brought about major change in international political dynamics that significantly influenced the politics in the region. India Bangladesh attempted to address some of the bilateral issues that had be devilled their relation but with limited success. When I.K. Gujral became prime minister he focused on relations with neighbours and emphasised that India would not expect reciprocity in its relation with its smaller neighbours³⁶. India's key challenged in the neighbourhood is to improve trust and cooperation, enhance connectivity for greater trade within the region, enhance regional cooperation and safeguard its security through multilateral and bilateral framework of cooperation³⁷.over the last two decades, India's trajectory is more firmly established in the globalized economy, where national boundaries give way secular identities while Bangladesh, perhaps due its less developed economy, is somewhat more established in the traditional part³⁸.

In the post cold war era, with the winning of the general elections by Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Mujibur Rahman, and with the help of secular forces, good sense has prevailed in Bangladesh. The changed attitude of Bangladesh under the leaders has brought about a turning point in its relations with India. They have decided to prepare the ground for greater understanding and resolution of some long standing problems³⁹. Now, India and Bangladesh agreed to find a permanent solution for past problems which are still effective factors for their relations. In 1996, the Awami League government signed the landmark Ganges Water Treaty and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord with India. The former, to a large extent, resolved a nagging problem between the two countries. Sheikh Hasina was convinced that resolution of the water issue would help the two countries consolidate their bilateral relations in a meaningful manner⁴⁰. Bilateral trade promotion agreement and, most importantly, addressing the security concerns of neighbours'. During the Foreign Secretary level consultation in Delhi in June 2005, Bangladesh side proposed the consideration of new bus route such as Dhaka –Guwahati.

India had shown considerable flexibility on Teen Bigha corridor issue in 2001, agreeing to open the corridor for the citizens of Bangladesh for 12 hours During Manmohan Singh's visit, India also agreed to keep the Tin Bigha Corridor, which connects Dahagram and Angorporta enclaves with mainland Bangladesh, open for 24 hours, thereby removing a longstanding irritant in Bangladesh-India relations. Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the opening of the corridor round-the-clock in October 2011⁴¹. Border disputes along the Feni River in Tripura was settled by the two government in May 2007, when India agreed to transfer 35 acre of land Koilermukh –Ramgarh region along the international border in Tripura. In an expression of cooperation, Bangladesh also handed over top leaders of ULFA to Indian security forces in August 2008. Dhaka – Kolkata passenger train named as "Maitree Express" was commissioned on 14 April 2008⁴².

India has offered 100 slots courses under ITEC and 35 slots under a technical cooperation scheme under Colombo plan every year to Bangladesh. It is very welcome looking fact that during the year 2006-07 to 2009-10, total 414

participants from Bangladesh have undergone training in India under ITEC programme and technical cooperation scheme under Colombo plan⁴³.

The prime minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina, accompanied by a 123 member visited India from January 10-13, 2010 and exchange draft agreement on Teesta water sharing issue with India. After the agreement, Teesta water would provide big support to agriculture production in the North –West region of Bangladesh. On 10th January 2010, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was also conferred with the prestigious Indira Gandhi prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development⁴⁴. During the Indian Prime Minister visit to Dhaka in 2011, a number of memorandums of understanding were signed in a bid to institutionalize cooperation between Bangladesh and India on the said areas. Manmohan Singh visited Dhaka in early September 2011. During Singh's visit, a protocol to the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement was signed 'to address all outstanding land boundary issues and provide a final settlement to the India-Bangladesh boundary.' It noted the outstanding issues as follows: (i) Un demarcated land boundaries in three sectors viz. Daikhata-56 (West Bengal), Muhuri River-Belonia (Tripura) and Dumabari (Assam); (ii) enclaves; and (iii) adverse possessions. Besides, the exchange of adversely possessed lands along the Bangladesh-India border in Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya, and West Bengal and 162 enclaves - 111 Indian enclaves inside Bangladesh and 51 Bangladeshi enclaves inside India - were finalised at the time of the prime ministers' meeting⁴⁵.

The power sector cooperation between Bangladesh and India has witnessed steady progress. Bangladesh and India are in negotiations to ink a power purchase agreement for the purchase of 250MW electricity from India to Bangladesh. A joint Venture Agreement (JVA) was signed in January 2012 between two countries for 1,320MW coal fired power plant in Bangladesh. The first trade agreement between India and Bangladesh was signed in 1972 and has been renewed up to 31st March 2012. Despite cooperation and dialogues on myriad disputes between two countries, there are still many disputes to be resolved, so far, which requires utmost sincere efforts from both the sides.

India Bangladesh signed two landmark agreements to extradite criminals and terrorist and liberalise the visa regime. The Bangladesh cabinet approved the extradition treaty at its regular meeting president over by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The Indian cabinet approved it on January 24, 2013⁴³.

CONCLUSIONS

Bangladesh as a small country that was once a part of India, it is extremely sensitive for India. India needs to accept and recognise to Bangladesh for both betterment. India- Bangladesh have had a chequered past. With the end of the cold war the consolidation of a new era of globalisation, Indian foreign policy has entered a period of deep uncertainty. To be sure, the weaknesses of its thinking on security existed then as well. But at least its external or foreign policy behaviour had a greater coherence than it does now. India's policy for Bangladesh should be clear and specific. Bangladesh lacks the political will, security capabilities, Economic, geographical and bilateral issues to resolve with India. After the end of cold war, the very nature of international politics has changed. Various trends have emerged as fallout of the end of the cold war Foreign policy is changeable; it changes with time and circumstances. With the end of cold war, world politics became totally change and many challenges emerged in front of nation-states in terms of their foreign relations. India's policy planner brought changes in foreign policy according to changed world scenario. Globalisation, look east policy, free trade policy and focused on maintain relations with neighbouring country. These are the features of post cold war period. Consequences of that all the major and powerful country accept this in their foreign policy. Bangladesh is crucial for India because Bangladesh represents benefits, opportunities. In the post cold war period Bangladesh is one of our biggest trading

partners. India's relations with Bangladesh also important for energy purpose, Bangladesh could sell us natural gas, and we could sell it hydropower. If India wishes to continue its relationship with Bangladesh it needs to be take a good look for all issues with Bangladesh.

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